

Title: That's special: an investigation of Australian TAFE Libraries' rare and special collections.

Everyone loves cook books and each of us has a special recipe within us. Collecting and preserving these special memories are part of what William Angliss Institute, as a specialist centre for Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, does. In 2008, major renovations to the Institute saw the re-launch of a special collections archives room dedicated to preserving yet expanding its rich collection of cookery material. While library staff celebrated the new archive room, they were also thinking about ways to make this rare collection better serve its clients.

But how special is special and what is unique amongst other rare collections held within the Australia's TAFE library sector?

A survey was under-taken to determine how rare the special collections held within Australian TAFE libraries are. Consideration was given to the subject specialization of these collections and how the content is managed, preserved and arranged.

From a digitization project to exhibition creation within the learning commons model, this paper offers an Australian wide snapshot of rare collections in Australian TAFE libraries. It highlights practices and issues in collection development, management, and challenges faced during different projects. It also suggests that shifts from the traditional role of acquisition and cataloguing for rare materials to the importance of making it more accessible and promoted electronically is embedded within the changing hybrid nature of libraries themselves.

Goodbye white gloves

"Collection development, as a library activity, is designed with the specific purpose to provide the library with an information resource that meets the appropriate needs of its client population" (Gessesse 2000)

The ways in which libraries are responding to the electronic earthquake is unprecedented. The rapid growth and expansion of information has witnessed a library's mission shift from developing collections to managing them. A change from the traditional custodian role to one of renter or leaser of information implies significant cultural adjustments, both for

the organization and librarian. Online catalogs, the internet, database and web 2.0 technology- this historic snapshot towards ubiquitous electronic access, is indicative of the sudden transition in the profession from controller to distributor.

The library today is in a state of transition brought about by digital information. The competing yet complementary role surrounding collection development now splits along familiar double lines.

- Space

Space and creating a learning environment spur discussion on the effective maximization of services and facilities. Better use of the stacks or creating student exhibition areas are but two examples of functional and flexible learning space design.(Branin 2007). Common themes of effective collaborative learning space dominate the reinvigoration of the library as a non-hush facility. No longer a place only of book shelves and directive facilitation, the library has morphed into an information conduit, a user-centric and service focused hub supporting social activity, learning and research.(Gabbard 2007)

- Collection and content management.

Collection development and management stress the identification, organization and maintenance of resources allied to the library's mission. Selection was based on the learning, teaching and research needs of the staff and student population. The continued use of print material still occurs. In general, open collection strategies, such as stocktaking and weeding of unnecessary material, reflect a greater push for exposure and use of the library's most substantial non-human resource.

The current debate of print v. electronic embodies broader philosophical concerns of a library's role. Yet the constantly changing information needs of the user remains a steadfast yardstick measuring a library's anticipation and response in service provision. The expectation of un-restricted access devoid of local ownership and space restrictions, has re-positioned the library as one big digitization project with no beginning date and no end.

Why collect anything special anymore?

"One's job was to get it, catalog it and preserve it. We are now expected to get, it, catalog it and promote" (Traister 2003)

Despite the criteria for inclusion in special collections ranging from being outstanding examples of the material, to limited editions of high valuation to items of exceptional provenance, special collections invariably carried a stigma. The ethos of non-circulation, imposition of reading room regulations, the inability often to browse, special databases and even complicated requesting forms and procedures (Johnston 2006) - in fact every imposition to easy consultation and use, often fell back on and beyond the nature of the material itself. Its rareness and fragility offered barriers to both handling the material and being able to use it in a familiar manner. Similarly, the copy cataloguing requirements often returned the indexer to scratch pushed there by the very type, rareness and uniqueness of the resource.

The movement principally away from print resources to electronic stresses the new maxim that if something is not used, then why have it? The mantra of convenient desktop accessibility targets collection development policies prohibitive of research capability and ease and speed of use. Special collections, though they offer richness for future generations, must provide accessibility and immediate content for today's impatient student.

Seen less as the embodiment of silence and hard to get to resources, special collections now represent myriad marketing, promotion and digital opportunities for the information profession. Collection elitism, once strongly under the yoke of policy, acquisition, maintenance and space shackles, now is experiencing the freshness of the ubiquitous and eternal demand for digital access. Every library is adapting to the axiomatic change from book access to immediate access and delivery options. Special collections and archives, once that secluded and formidable face of restriction, now faces challenges under-pinned by the rapid publication and dissemination of information.

General acceptance that material should be accessible is as much result of re-configuration of space as it is of the assessment of its relevance. The collection development question about whether the resources are needed continues to prickle policy. Its relevance, timeliness and quality remain immovable criteria for consideration. The need for flexibility and promotion weighs heavily on the assessment of the collection's purpose. (Gessesse 2000) Especially for special collections, this extends beyond circulation statistics into the realm of the specific institute's need for research,

teaching and future use. Ultimately, factors such as convenience of access and co-operative sharing of resources will determine directions in special collection development policy. The digitization of these important resources will shape its availability with the web or internet as its primary face of promotion.

The problem of the cohort

"Our clients range in age from 15 to 65+ and 47% of TAFE students are over the age of 30. Some 397,900 apprentices and trainees were in training as of September 2007" (Hannan 2008)

It is easy to establish the number and location of Australian university libraries via a web search. A similar listing of Australian TAFE libraries is far more problematic. Unlike Australian university libraries linked under the umbrella of the Council of Australian Universities (CAUL), the Australian TAFE sector is as diverse and varied as the industry connected courses they offer. There appears no unified national structure but instead co-habitation under either State federations, co-operative arrangements, statutory boards or allied bodies. Alternatively, decentralised management either as standalone bodies, joint use facilities, or as dual sector institutions (i.e. universities offering a TAFE sector) also occurs.

The National Centre for Vocational Research (NCVER) listed under providers offering vocational education in 2007 - 59 units of TAFE in Australia, 100 other government providers, 529 community education providers and 1384 other registered providers. (IBIS) Difficulties arise in splitting these units- are all these units separate institutions? What is the definition of a campus? Are some offices in rural areas considered as a TAFE site? What about shared partnerships with Shires and Councils (e.g. Kimberley and Pilbara TAFE) or issues of governance under State authorities (e.g. NSW with 11 listed yet upwards of 130 campuses that fall under their umbrella.

Table 1 reveals a demographic break-down of TAFEs in Australia and their governance but final accurate numbers still remains problematic.

Table 1: Demography & Governance of Australian TAFEs

State	Governance	Number of Institut	Number of sites
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		es	
Victoria	Dual sector/ standalone/joint use with management under individual Acts (Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority)	20 ¹	70 ²
New South Wales	TAFE NSW under VETAB Act and Vocational Education & Training Accreditation Board	10 ³	130 ⁴
Queensland	TAFE Queensland under Training and Employment Recognition Council	13 ⁵	76
Tasmania	Until 2009 under TAFE Tasmania. Now separate Polytechnic and Skills Tasmania structure	2	20 ⁶
South Australia	TAFE SA under Training and Skills Commission	25	52
Western Australia	TAFE WA under Training Accreditation Council	7 ⁷	37
Northern Territory	Department of Education and Training	2 ⁸	15
Australian capital Territory	CIT under Act Accreditation Agency	1	5
Total		78	289

In seeking out the libraries within this broad panorama, the investigation raised even more questions than answers. With dual sector institutions, do you count only the TAFE library

¹ Source: VATL www.vatl.org.au <accessed 25 February 2009>

² Includes 4 dual sector sites

³ Includes dual sector arrangement with University of Newcastle.

⁴ Source: <http://tafecat.tafensw.edu.au/AlphalistLib.html> <accessed 25 February 2009>

⁵ Includes 2 statutory TAFE institutes. Source: http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/about_us/institutes/ <accessed 27 February 2009>

⁶ Source: <http://library.polytechnic.tas.edu.au/> <accessed 27 February 2009>

⁷ Source: <http://www.tafe-australia.org/tafe-international-western-australia> <accessed 28 February 2009>

⁸ Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute

or all the libraries that a TAFE student can access? Is it a region or a location? Is it a campus or simply an office or mobile service for rural students? If it is a campus, would each of their sites know the collection specialisation of the other? Is it better to contact too many rather than too little?

This investigation of Australian TAFE libraries revealed 289 individual library sites within a total number of 78 institutions within the 59 established unit framework.

A preliminary survey cohort was formed yet difficulties of interpretation remained. Confusion was apparent in distinguishing between campuses and individual library sites in some states because of over-arching co-ordination by governing authorities. In Victoria organisations like the Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries (VATL) act as a representative body for up to 18 libraries? In New South Wales more than 130 sites sit under the TAFE NSW banner whilst other states repeat this centralised governance yet dispersed autonomy. Further confusion exists in determining precise numbers depending on what source or authority you consult- TAFE Australia, NCVER, internet directories, individual students guide resources and individual TAFE listings under each state, for example TAFEWA.

In the end, a 188 strong library contact base was formalised using a combination of all sources and the principle of using the widest not least coverage possible as most appropriate.

But compared to its big brother

Comparison to its university library colleague is inevitable. Within the university library sector, the promotion and advocacy of special or rare book collections forms part of their collection strength. It is frequently advertised as paragons of their research capability and status. Examples like, Monash University Library's rare book with its revolving exhibits, or the University of Tasmania's Quaker collection, serve as just two exemplars.

Table 2: University Libraries special collections

State	Number of University Libraries	Number of University Libraries listed as having a	Approximate number of University Library special

		special collection	collections within those libraries
Victoria	8	6	At least 61
New South Wales	10 Including ADFA	6	At least 38
Queensland	7	1	At least 4
Tasmania	1	1	7
South Australia	3	3	At least 37
Western Australia	5	1	12
Northern Territory	1	0	0
Australian capital Territory	2	2	At least 2
Multi-state sited	2	1	0
Total	39	21	At least 161

However, table 2 is a moving feast. It reflects the advertised and accessible feature of website investigation and does not reveal what lies hidden behind the html. Confusion also surrounds the difference between archives and special collections. In some cases, theses were included; by others, this was not the case. Some university libraries split their special collections (e.g. literature) into various constituent features, whilst the inclusion of restricted access rooms without further elucidation, further muddied the definition waters.

Consistent though was of the 39 viewed university library sites, 21 or 53% had special collections promoted as a prestigious and important part of their resources and information service. Highlights ranged from the University of Sydney Library which listed 22 special collections (e.g. the Henry Lawson collection) to Monash University Library Rare Book Room which publicises at least 19 areas on its website, to the single advocacy for the University of Western Sydney Library's Gough Whitlam collection.

A bit about methodology

Given the subject specialisation of my own library at the William Angliss Institute in culinary arts, the relevant

question was how unique or special was this collection. Beyond the compactus, do Australian TAFE libraries have their own special collections to rival the university sector. If so, how are they managed and what is their specialisation?

A simple and easy to complete survey was developed via the survey monkey online tool.

The 10 questions sent to Library branch managers related to:

- Type and location of TAFE Library.
- Whether rare books, special collections or archives form part of that collection?
- If so, their subject specialisation.
- Number of items and their format.
- How are they consulted?
- How are they managed?

Additional space on the survey was left blank to solicit further information and an indication of participation in further research. The survey was sent via email to the 188 cohort on January 30th 2009, with a reminder email sent two weeks later. Results were tabulated via the online tool on February 25th and exported into an excel spreadsheet for easy manipulation.

More hurdles

For each State except Victoria, there were contact address errors, with either no direct email address to the library or bounced emails, (for example, 3 from TAFE libraries in Queensland). A few invitations sent out had to be re-routed via online enquiry forms. A number of campuses in Queensland shared one email address. There were also inaccuracies in the email addresses requiring further checking. One TAFE library replied that they won't fill in the online survey as they only have a small library. 3 emails responded that "they don't have special collections". One phone call stated "good luck with the research."

So what was found?

Fifty six out of a possible 188 surveys sent were received within the following three weeks making approximately a 30% response rate. But this figure is again misleading. Responses from one institute may cover several bases, for example, dual sector institutes, or alternatively may be inclusive of, for example, the recent shift of TAFE Tasmania to a new merger of

Polytechnic and Skills Institutes. Table 3 reveals the type of TAFE library whilst Table 4 shows their demographics.

Table 3: Type of TAFE Library and Sector

Type of Library		
Sector	Frequency	Percent
Dual Sector	6	11%
Stand Alone	25	45%
Joint use	7	12%
Co-ordinated	17	31%
Not supplied	1	1%
Total	56	100%

Table 4: Type of TAFE Library and Sector

In which state or territory is your TAFE located?		
Sector	Frequency	Percent
Western Australia	4	7%
Northern Territory	1	2%
Queensland	7	12%
New South Wales	19	34%
Victoria	10	18%
Tasmania	3	5%
South Australia	10	19%
ACT	2	3%
Total	56	100%

The confusion about what actually constitutes a "special collection" needed to be defined. The Centre for Digital Library Research suggests that special collections are those library materials which, by virtue of their physical form, content or depth of subject coverage, are distinguished from the general. An implicit understanding is that they are often rare, secured and monitored in a secure environment and best handled separately from the rest.

The difference between this and archives as a "load of dusty old papers and files" (GMCRO) is in the stress placed by any Institute in its overall record keeping policy. Yet ambiguous perceptions and clear cut collection development lines permeate beyond the library's walls. 7 libraries responded that they have archives, rare book rooms and special collections, or all three. Definition defaulted to one's own particular interpretation.

Table 5: Your library and the type of "special collection" category.

Does your particular library site have any of the following? please tick all that apply)		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Special collection/s	25	40%
Rare book room/s	2	3%
Archive/s	6	10%
None of the above	30	48%
Total	63	100%

NB: 4 libraries answered Special Collection AND Archive
 1 library answered Special collection AND rare book room
 1 library answered Special collection AND Rare book room and Archive
 1 library answered Archive but noted it no longer exists!

The survey revealed that less than half of the responding TAFE libraries (25 or 40%) said that they had special collections. A number of comments that fell outside this 40% cohort were:

- "We do specialise in the subject areas taught at this campus but the collection is current and relevant in line with the needs of students"
- "We collect in the areas we teach"
- "This Campus does not have any special collections but does specialise in horticulture resources as that is the main subject area taught at this campus"
- "We are a small specialist campus and the library serves the needs of students and staff. While we do hold some 'rare material' in reference the majority of the collection is for general circulation. It is necessarily a 'specialised collection'".

Perhaps it is a question of defining what one's collection purpose is in the light of TAFE's closer alliance to practical teaching and industry engagement for the institute. And yet in recent years the TAFE library profession has pushed towards a user centre learning environment reflected in the learning commons model. (Youens 2008) For the librarian, this is reflected in an expanded role as facilitator in the learning process, as a conduit to using technology and resources and as a teacher of information literacy and research skills. (Hannan

2008)

One library commented that its whole collection is special (or specialised) in aviation or that "We purchase current material in the subject areas that we teach. Therein lays the speciality."

But what are these specialities? Do they weigh up evenly against the more clearly identified university profile? Is my own library strongly placed to promote its unique special collection in culinary arts amongst its competitors?

Table 6 reveals the strength of many stand alone TAFE libraries in the area of special collection development, with more than half (13 of 25) or 52% indicating a special collection that supports their teaching programs offered for example welding, forestry or printing. Interestingly, subject specialisation in less industry focused areas such as aboriginal culture and indigenous rights was strongly represented by many of the standalone TAFEs.

What is the subject specialization of your special collection/s?	Approximately how many items are there in the special collection?							
	Books	AV	Journals	Pictures	Theses	Maps	Music	Realia
Institute memorabilia				400				25
Power Station Manuals pertinent to the Brown Coal Industry in the Latrobe Valley	25							
Three main subject streams: - History and culture of the Western region of Melbourne - Left wing politics - Australian Literature.	10000	25	200		25	25	25	25
Indigenous rights	50		25					
Art	1100	125		25				
Printing	200	400						
South West Music Archive South West Institute Oral History							350	
Northern Australia, East Timor, Theses.								
Local and Family History TAFE resources	2000							
Cooking and hospitality	350		200					
Children's services Women's education								
Forestry	200	100		50				50
Automotive (motor manuals), Graphic Arts (Penrose Process Yearbook)	450							
Foreign Language Fiction Collection	475	25	100					
A nursing reserve collection	200							
Fashion design and costume history Automotive service manuals (in process of being donated to the Queensland State Library)	850	350	2600					
locksmithing	1100		150					
Aviation	1600	375						
We are a specialist nursing/health library for TAFE students.	1200	500						

We have concentrated on development of a collection which supports the programs offered here. They are Community Services (specifically Aged care), Automotive, Welding, Manufacture, Retail and Business Studies	6900	325	25			25	25	25
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies	200	50	25				25	
Aboriginal culture	1200	500		25			25	
NSW Higher school certificate (history, art, IT, maths, geography, drama etc)	10000	300						
amenity horticulture veterinary nursing floristry	3500	350	25			25		
Equipment and training materials for all programs delivered across our region. ESL collection (300 items approx)	475	550						
Totals	42075	3975	3350	500	25	75	450	125

Books dominate the special collections with over 42,000 items recorded of the 50,575. Journals occupied less than 7% of special collections, with the only exception to this pattern being a standalone Queensland TAFE library having 3 times the number of journals than books. There was no discernable trend between the type of TAFE library and its collection numbers. However, the dual sector institute library, which formed 5 or 20% of responses, is more fiscally positioned within a broader tertiary infrastructure. One of these respondents revealed that their extensive collection in the history and culture of western Melbourne, left wing politics and Australian literature was part of its library development and a special room of a 20,000 book and 200 journal title capacity.

The lack of theses collected (only recorded by one respondent) is indicative of the certificate and diploma qualification structure within TAFE. This may shift, and subsequently affect collection policy, as more TAFE institutes start to offer higher education integration into their curriculums.

Many TAFE libraries commented on projects under-way.

"We are in the process of collecting all TAFE memorabilia into a special collections room (currently the old darkroom). None of it is catalogued yet."

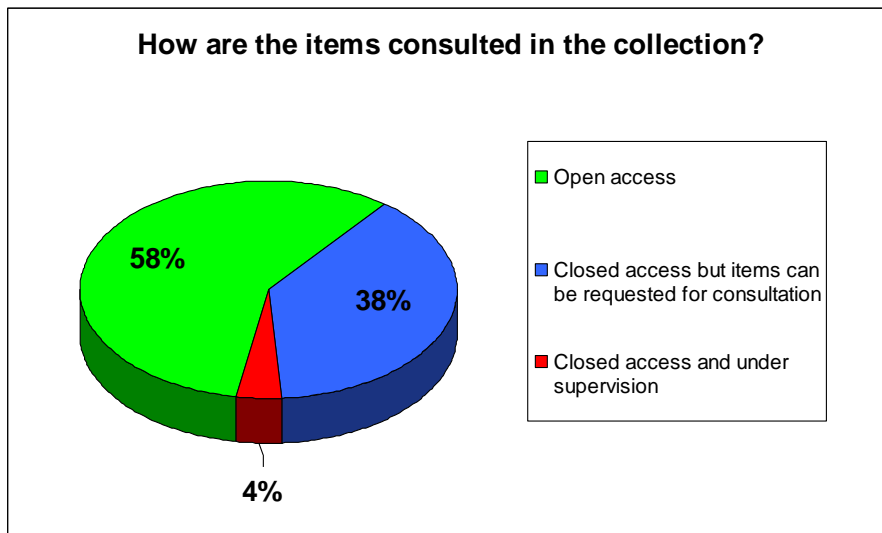
Panofsky wryly comments on this excessive archival restriction on scholars seeking access to primary material. (Panofsky 205) Surprisingly, in contrast to the more hallowed restrictions of many university library collections, access to these special TAFE collections was predominately open with 15 or 58% saying that there was no restriction to viewing the material. (Graph 1).

"Archives traditionally had the least computerisation of finding aids as well as the tightest control of holdings, so site visits were necessary" (Robinson 2007)

A retrieval request service for consultation was offered for all bar one of the remaining TAFE libraries (10 or 38%) with one library noting that it supervised access to its material. Comments relating to closed access included:

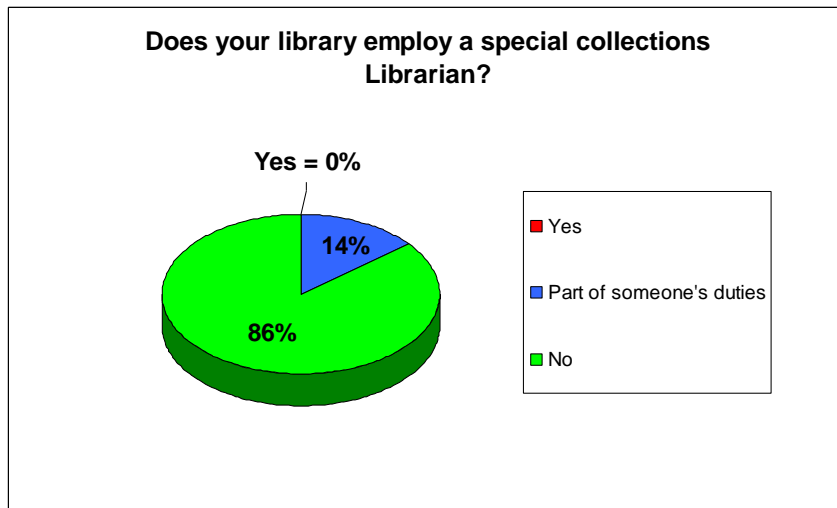
- "It is closed access in a closed compactus opened only by a key".
- "That the collection is still in development but will probably be closed access".
- "That quite a few collections are isolated due to indigenous protocols".

Graph 1: Special collection item consultation



Graph 2 shows that no respondents reported that they employ a special collection librarian, though 4 or 14% said that it formed part of someone else's duties. The smaller and multi-skilled nature of TAFE libraries is perhaps indicative of special collections being either part of someone's responsibilities, involving all staff where the collection is held, or as one TAFE librarian so succinctly put it: "We only have one librarian and I consider this as part of my role".

Graph2: Employment in special collections.



The William Angliss culinary special collection (WAI)

William Angliss Institute is a specialist stand alone TAFE and a specialist college for Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts. It has over 18,000 student enrolments covering short courses, certificate level and diploma level TAFE qualifications as well as two Higher Education degrees. (Kloppenborg 2009)

How does our Library compare to the survey results?

- We ranked as the 1st TAFE library in number of books classified as belonging to a culinary special collection. The collection numbers currently houses over 6110 items including books, pamphlets and brochures, newspaper clippings, manuscripts, photographs, plans, portraits and pictures, DVDs and CD-ROMs.
- Were the only known Australian TAFE Library to employ a full time Special Collection Co-ordinator to preserve expand and promote our archival collection of cookery materials, including menus, recipes, manuscripts, wine books, and magazines.
- Noted that our collection is closed access but items can be requested for consultation.

This includes the Fuller Collection, one of England's finest collections of rare wine books that date back to the 18th century. Provided to the Institute by Professor John Fuller of Oxford collection it houses over 530 books on wine, distilling, brewing, viticulture and technological aspects of wine. The oldest was published in 1733 and other gems include Prized gems include Sir Edward Barry's 'Wines of the Ancients (1775); 'Liquor Acts of 1736 from the Reign of George III'

(1738) as well as an 1839 book on the philosophy of "artificial and compulsory drinking usage in Great Britain and Ireland".

Digitally, the William Angliss Institute LRC special collection is involved in 2 major projects in 2009.

- The Menu Collection.

This consists of hundreds of menus from all over the world from a variety of sources including cruise ships, clubs, restaurants, bars and hotels from early 1900s to the present and majority is 60's-70's.

Accepting that the widest possible access to this collection of over 1500 menus was desirable necessitated firstly a team approach to catalogue all the menus into a database whilst still accessioning, repairing and filing them. Because the menus prior to 1955 were considered "copyright clear", the expanded project focused on digitising these menus first into the jpg. format to ensure recommended file size, ease of communication and compatibility with scanner software like Photoshop.

- The Zimmerman digitisation project

Early 1996, the Zimmerman Collection was donated to William Angliss by alumnus Barry Zimmerman. The collection was begun by his great-grandfather, and consists of a book of more than 300 menus and epicurean articles from all over England and Europe. Dating back to 1862, the menus feature table d'hôte as well as banquet menus. Most are presented in French, some with a translation in their language of origin. The menus give us interesting insights into dining habits of the times. (See Figure 1)



Figure 1: The Zimmerman Book

The debate between cultural custodian and improved delivery on user expectations is current. This project will form the first of many endeavours to open up access to our rare material. Whilst digitization does not yet transverse issues of preservation, its increased prominence will facilitate increased use, new avenues of research and new users. (Hirtle 2002). The thrust will be to expose that which truly is unique to the widest audience and to encapsulate and encourage new scholarly pursuits via this dissemination. However the question about digital technology as an adjunct to rare physical resources, or its long term replacement, remains unanswered. (Smith 1999)

The future: Preservation, Access, Digitisation and client enrichment

"The emphasis of digitisation at libraries has shifted from creating digital collections to preserving and sharing digital collections." (Skelel 2008)

Library services continue to change in the services they offer and the way they operate, as they respond to changes in the way students and researchers go about their business. The push to user centred services means more than simple physical collection centred priorities. The expectation becomes a stronger marriage of print resources to new electronic storage and distribution. Collection management must change with changes in information demands and higher education

expectations. Whilst acknowledging that acquisition remains a focus of library service, the balance between having something and having flexible access to it becomes the moot point against exclusivity. (Suny 2000)

The differences between university and TAFE libraries continue to blur as higher education programmes embed themselves into the curriculum of some TAFE institutions. Yet the stronger research focus of universities remains a determinant of their advertised collection strength. University library special collections remain beacons of their research capabilities closely aligned to a philosophical stance to make rare or special collections more widely available. The drift towards institutional repositories, digital archive conservation and digitisation of difficult to access material are all examples of a push for visibility and not having rarities behind walls. As students become increasingly and more exclusively image and internet orientated, the archivists and special collections librarians of both ilk (the University and the TAFE) will need to take up the web challenge. Increasingly special collections and how they are distributed will become criteria of value. It will not be how rare and how many rare books a library possesses but how easily they can be researched and accessed, regardless of their format and delivery.

The difficulties in research methodology associated with such a dispersed and varied library clientele is another acknowledgement of further investigation. Difficulties in resolving the national grouping or union consortia of TAFE libraries are not insurmountable. In recognising the need for more consolidated national co-ordination, greater access to the resources and co-operative projects in resource collection can be initiated.

Can TAFE libraries ever match the universities' special collections? Do they need to? The uniqueness of the Australian TAFE library environment must be understood. There is often a minimum of staffing to do all the tasks. Industry engagement, competency based training, resources for apprentices and more, all serve to negate endeavours to establish specialist research centres. However, within the special collections of libraries within TAFE Australia, there are a number of jewels to be found. Whilst promoting my own involvement in the William Angliss Institute LRC's culinary collection, similar interest must be directed to the number of TAFE libraries special collections, ranging from women's education material to rare graphic art books to artefacts and precious lock smithing resources. These are treasures waiting to be discovered.

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